

## **Meeting Coventry Fire, Anthony District**

**Wednesday February 12, 2014**

**Board members in attendance Jim Beckman-Chair, Louis Cote-co-chair, Peter Pankowicz, John Botello, and John D,Ornfrio. Also in attendance Chief Labbadia and Deputy Chief Robert Warren.**

**Meeting called to order at 7:10 P.M.**

### **AGENDA:**

- 1) Emergency evacuation procedures**
- 2) Roll call**
- 3) Approval of the minutes from the meeting held on January 8, 2014.**

**John D\Ornfrio made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Peter Pankowicz. All in Favor, motion carries.**

**4) Chairman's report: Jim Beckman stated that the Board would not be able to go onto Executive session because it was not posted on the agenda. Jim Beckman also stated that the Board would be able to discuss the testing issues in an open meeting but there would be certain questions that would not be allowed.**

**5) Chief Report: The Chief said that Arthur Capaldi was ill and would be unable to attend this meeting. The Chief stated that he and Arthur**

Capaldi are waiting for more information and additional materials on the testing issues. The Chief mentioned that the old rescue had been sent out to be repaired. He also said that collections have been good so far this year and that we have paid down some of the line of credit.

The ladder payment is due on the 15th of the month and that will add more onto the line of credit. The Chief said that some of the supplies he ordered have come in and that things are running well. The Chief said that the tax sale is being held at the station tomorrow and there would be another one in the next four months. Jean Lukowicz, the tax collector said that next tax sale is going to be in June of this year and they are setting up the next one for October. John Botello asked the Chief where the rescue went and the Chief stated that it went to the facility to have the new box fitted to the chassis. John Botello asked if the Chief had the specifications and the final price. The Chief said the final price was \$95,000.00. The Chief said that he received approval from Merrimack Finance Company. Jim Beckman asked when the payments were to start and the Chief said April of this year for a seven year lease at \$15,500.00 a month and we allocated \$15,600.00 so we are within our budget. The Chief told John Botello that he does not have any specifications the rescue. John Botello told the Chief that if they are rearranging the box there should be specs. The Chief said there were no major changes being made just some hinges and latches and it is just a new box on the chassis. John Botello said that he is just making sure that we are getting our money's worth. John Botello asked the Chief if he would inspect the rescue before signing off on it and the Chief said yes.

**6) Tax office report: Prepared and read by Jeanne Lukowicz, tax collector. Taxes collected to date \$749,435.04. Interest collected to date \$18,471.78. Total tax and interest \$767,906.82. Total legal collected \$8,285.60. Total monies collected \$776,192.42. The tax sale is tomorrow February 13, 2014. We have seven properties left originally there were 82 properties. Another 70 properties were sent to the attorney, and letters were sent out on February 5, 2014 for a new tax sale. Back taxes uncollected for 2010 and prior is \$4,022.97. Back taxes owed from 2011 is \$5,066.98, back taxes collected from 2011 is \$261.66 and the balance uncollected is \$4,805.32. Back taxes owed from 2012 is \$51,828.68, back taxes collected from 2012 is \$19,794.56 and the balance of uncollected from 2012 is \$32,034.12. Back taxes owed from 2013 is \$336,698.71, back taxes collected is \$116,378.23 and the balance of uncollected for 2013 is \$220,320.48. The levy for 2014 is \$2,163,212.69 we have collected \$613,000.59 with balance of \$1,550,212.10. The Chief also mentioned that the amount of uncollected back taxes for 2012 will be lower after tomorrow's tax sale. The Chief said that raising taxes increases the uncollectable and we try to schedule tax sales in between quarters when collections are slow. The Chief said that sometimes people buy houses in our district and are unaware of the fire tax and they think it is included in their mortgage so we work with people to get them caught up on their taxes. The Chief stated that the only properties that go up or tax sale are those that are more than one year behind and we follow a certain procedure to make sure everyone is informed of the situation before it happens. Jeanne Lukowicz stated that some**

taxpayers are on payment plans and have been keeping up with the payments. The Chief said that we are consistently \$320,000.00 to \$330,000.00 in uncollectable every year and we get that money back through tax sales. Louis Cote made a motion to accept the tax office report as read, seconded by John Botello, all in favor motion carries.

7) Treasures Report: Prepared and read by Judith Hetherman, treasurer. As of January 31, 2014 there was a total of \$229,595.38 in the operating account. We still have the \$59,403.90 in the the reserve CD. The outstanding bills as of January 31, 2014 was \$44,567.48. The balance on the line of credit as of January 31, 2014 is \$474,896.44. We have since paid down the line of credit by \$80,000.00 and outstanding bills are \$15,995.00 and the ladder lease payment was made today. The total collections and deposits since the beginning of the fiscal year are \$616,362.92 and the operating expenses are \$527,537.57. This leaves us a total positive income of \$88,825.35. The balance on the line of credit is now \$394,896.00 which is what the balance was at the end of the last fiscal year. The Chief stated that the line of credit only goes down to about \$110,000.00 and then goes back up when October comes around and collections slow down. Judith Hetherman asked when the payment on the new loan for refurbishing the rescue would be due and the Chief answered in April during the second quarter when we have more cash flow. Louis Cote made a motion to accept the treasurer's report as read, seconded by Peter Pankowicz, all in favor, motion carries.

8) Old Business: The Chief said that in response to the grievance involving the testing he has received one quote for testing and is

waiting for two more. The Chief stated that when he gets all the information he will give it to the Board and invite the Union to sit down and come up with a plan together. Jim Beckman asked the Chief he has the numbers from the MOA and the Chief said he ran the numbers and is waiting for Judith Hetherman to double check his numbers. Jim Beckman mentioned that at the Executive Session special meeting held on January 30, 2014 there was never a vote taken to seal the minutes. John Botello made a motion to seal the minutes from that meeting, seconded by John D'Ornfrio, all in favor, motion carries. The minutes will be sealed.

9) New Business: The Chief mentioned that until he sees paperwork from the Judge saying that the Central Coventry Fire District is liquidated there is nothing we can do at this time. The Chief said that the preliminary agreement between the Town and the other remaining fire districts is to separate the CCFD into the three remaining districts. This would give increase our levy by \$1.6 million dollars. The Chief stated that these are only rough numbers at this point and nothing is 100% and there are many variables to be considered. He stated that there is still too many unanswered questions and we need to see how much debt will be left over after the liquidation. At this point the Chief said he was under the assumption that two stations from the CCFD will remain and three will be sold but is unsure of how true that is and remains to be seen. The Chief said he believes the two stations that would remain would be the Washington station and the Hill Farm station. Chief said his ideal plan would be to keep Washington and Anthony stations open to cover the district and the

part of Central that we would absorb. The Chief said that the question is where the money would be coming from because at this point we cannot afford to hire more man power and it would take a toll on our guys and we need to rely on mutual aid from other districts and other towns. The Chief said that he and Chief Brown would have to sit down and reconfigure the run cards and what other municipalities we would use for mutual aid. The Chief says he knows what he would do with the additional \$1.6 million dollars. The Chief also said that ultimately, by charter, we have to have a special meeting and let our tax payers decide whether or not they want to absorb some of Central Coventry's taxpayers. The Chief believes that legally the taxpayers in Central Coventry will have no say either way and that is up to the other districts to decide individually whether or not to accept a portion of the Central district. Jim Beckman said that he and Chief speak cautiously because it will overwhelm our budget and put additional wear and tear on our equipment and our guys. Jim Beckman said that once we have more information we will be able to discuss this issue further. John Botello asked the Chief if the ISO has been at our station lately and the Chief said no. John Botello stated that the ISO is in Town and has been to West Warwick to Central Coventry. John Botello said that he has talked to them because that is part of his job in West Warwick Fire Dept. John Botello said the ISO told him that they have done an overview look of West Warwick, Coventry and East Greenwich. The Chief said he has sat down with ISO many times in the past. The Chief said the ISO has changed the way they do their services so it's going to affect every

municipality in the state. The Chief said he could have an automatic aid card that has four engines, two ladders and a rescue and is only given credit for one truck under the ISO. John Botello said he understands that but with Central being liquidated and with those trucks and that man power going away it is going to affect the ISO rating and our insurance rates for this district. John Botello said that is why he is asking the Chief about the ISO and if they have sat down with him to do an official evaluation. The Chief said he knows Mark Shelly from the ISO very well and the Chief said he has had him in the station and that Mr. Shelly recommended that he not come back. John Botello said that the ISO came to the door in West Warwick and they were not invited. The Chief said he knows everything that is going on and knows that it will affect the insurance rates if they do come in and do a re-evaluation just based on our fire alarm and man power. The Chief said it would have a bigger impact on our commercial tax payers than the residential. Jim Beckman said the ISO rating are based on everything such as training records and six or seven other categories such as yearly required training. Louis Cote asked if there was a Bill put through by Lou Raptakis the Chief said yes but they are holding off on that because everyone was hoping that the CCFD would still be here, but is ready to go if needed.

A firefighter asked if the CCFD shut down on May 16 what happens on May 17 if there is a fire call at Rhodes Technology who is going to cover our district. The Chief re stated that the other Chiefs and he would have to restructure the run cards and figure that out before that date. The firefighter also asked if mutual aid would still be

available. The Chief said mutual aid would not be refused automatic aid would be gone but they would still be obligated by law if they are in the mutual agreement to respond. Jim Beckman said automatic aid can be refused but not mutual aid. The Chief and the firefighter agreed that there will be operational issues that will need to be addressed. The Chief said if the doors at CCFD close and we can't afford to put another rescue in service we won't be able to put another rescue in service. The Chief said we cannot run our dept. into the ground and we will do whatever we can but we cannot wipe out our entire budget. The fire fighter also asked about the charter saying that we lose our ability to tax if the Town of Coventry takes over. The Chief said that would only happen in the event that the town does take over and decide to have one municipal fire district. The Chief said that the town taking over abolishes all the other districts charters and their taxing ability. Jim Beckman thought that if the town collects one penny in taxes than they have to collect them all. The Chief said no that is only if they decide to have one municipal fire department. The Chief said that information comes from the Town of Coventry's lawyer Mr. Tobin. The Chief said the Town thinks it's a big deal because they have to buy equipment but they would actually use the other districts equipment and is not a big deal because the tax payers actually own the equipment. The Chief said the other issue that the Town has is that it would have to raise taxes. Louis Cote said that East Greenwich just did the same thing. The Chief thinks that the town taking over is a good thing and that takes the pressure off all the other fire Chiefs in town and they just do



whatever the Town says. The Chief thinks the redistricting plan is alright but we would have to hire 16 more men to staff the Washington station with new run cards so that the closest truck would respond. The Chief said the goal would be to cover the town with low response times and make the numbers work for everyone. A fire fighter asked if there are any other court dates set up for Judge to discuss the situation. The Chief said no and the CCFD is closing as of May 16, 2014 and that was the Judges final decision. The Chief said the Town Council President called him today and said that the town manager was going to set up a meeting for all the fire chiefs to sit and meet again. The Chief said that his Deputy Chief always attends the meetings but would also like a Board member to attend. The meetings are usually held around four in the afternoon and should be done next week. Judith Hetherman asked what happens if the CCFD shuts its doors and the public votes not to absorb a portion of the CCFD. The Chief said he believes the Town would have to step in and do something at that point. The Chief said he was trying to stay out of it because he doesn't really want to take them over but he will if he has to but it is not his first choice. Jim Beckman asked if he could get a volunteer to look into group insurance for errors and omissions for the Board. The Chief said we are already covered as far as he knows and that we had that coverage when he became Chief of the district. The Treasurer wasn't covered at that time but now everyone is covered.

10) Public Comment: None

11) John Bordello made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded

**by Peter Pankowicz. All in favor, motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 7:50 P.M.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Mary Perry**